

MEDICAREMATTERS

Special Edition II

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In This Issue

- 1** HHS and CMS Providing Assistance to Hurricane Victims
- 2** Take a Loved One for a Checkup Day

Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder Tool

Web-Stream Demonstration
- 3** Medicare Rx—Help is Here Resource Kit: Understanding, Deciding, Choosing, Enrolling

Upcoming Distance Learning Opportunities

The CMS Mobile Office Tour Energizes Communities



HHS AND CMS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO HURRICANE VICTIMS

HHS employees are already in the disaster and relief areas—the **Commissioned Corps** has been deployed, non-Corps clinicians have been deployed, and other HHS employees are in the field providing medical care and social services. Many of you may have been receiving calls and inquiries from those treating displaced residents in need of care. At <http://www.cms.hhs.gov> we have posted the **1135 Waiver** signed by **Secretary Leavitt** to allow the Department to waive certain program requirements during national emergencies, Qs and As to a variety of issues related to Medicare and Medicaid, and links to our Medicare contractors and State Medicaid Agencies.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** has acted to assure that the Medicare, Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Programs will flex to accommodate the emergency health care needs of beneficiaries and medical providers in the Hurricane Katrina devastated states. Many of the programs' normal operating procedures will be relaxed to speed provision of health care services to the elderly, children and persons with disabilities who depend upon them.

More information about CMS emergency relief activities, including a detailed explanation of billing and payment policy revisions, and phone numbers for the state medical assistance offices can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/katrina>. Frequently asked questions and their answers on the site will be updated daily by 2 p.m.



HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt and Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona talk to a patient at the 250-bed facility HHS is helping to run on the Louisiana State University campus at Baton Rouge.

TAKE A LOVED ONE FOR A CHECKUP DAY



Closing the Health Gap is a national campaign designed to help improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations who are affected by serious diseases and health conditions at far greater rates than other Americans. The **Office of Minority Health** is promoting **Take A Loved One for a Checkup Day** on **September 20**, which encourages all people to visit their health care provider on September 20 or make an appointment for a check-up. Many health problems can be prevented and others can be treated. The website provides information on helpful resources, a fact sheet which has a link for locations of health care providers, suggestions for national partner activities, and a toolkit for use by communities. For more information, please contact: Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 37337, Washington, DC 20013-7337, Phone: (800) 444-6472 or visit <http://www.healthgap.omhrc.gov>.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN FINDER TOOL

In October 2005, CMS will release the **Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder** tool on <http://www.medicare.gov>. This tool will provide detailed cost sharing information for Prescription Drug Plans (PDP), Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MAPD) plans, and Special Needs Plans based on an individual's eligibility or ineligibility for help paying for premiums or prescription drugs. Features that will be available in the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder tool are:

- Users will be able to drill down to the level of detail for the plans that they wish to include.
- Information that will be available for each of the plans will include, formulary information, Network Pharmacy Information, beneficiary cost sharing information for deductibles, premiums and prescription co-pays/coinsurances, information on whether or not the individual is likely to reach the coverage gap or catastrophic coverage level.
- Customized Print-on-Demand booklets for the tool will be available through 1-800-MEDICARE.
- CMS is developing an Online Enrollment Center that will be integrated into the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder to facilitate joining in participating PDP and MAPD plans. The Online Enrollment Center is scheduled for launch on November 15, 2005, to coincide with the Initial Enrollment Period for drug plans.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) at **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)** will have access to a customized version of the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder tool that will contain the same plan information as the public version on www.medicare.gov, but will be housed on separate servers in order to minimize delays in the CSRs accessing the data to assist callers faster and more efficiently. Callers to 1-800-MEDICARE will also be able to order a customized Print-on-Demand



WEB-STREAM DEMONSTRATION

CMS is pleased to announce that there is a web-stream demonstration of how the **Drug Plan Finder Tool** will look when it is rolled out. The URL is <http://media.cms.hhs.gov>, and it is available to Regional Office partners, SHIPs, and anyone who might be assisting people with Medicare with making a plan choice.

MEDICARE RX—HELP IS HERE RESOURCE KIT: UNDERSTANDING, DECIDING, CHOOSING, ENROLLING



The **National Medicare & You Training Program** is developing a Medicare prescription drug coverage resource kit for CMS partners. The kit will include a Prescription Drug Plan Finder (PDPF) instructional CD as well as other materials to provide partners with the information and tools they need to help people with Medicare understand, decide, choose and join a plan. The kit will be available by October 15, 2005, at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships>.

UPCOMING DISTANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The **National Medicare & You Training Program** will sponsor a series of five webcasts this fall. Individual webcasts will provide an overview of Medicare prescription drug coverage, choosing and joining a drug plan, and using the **Prescription Drug Plan Finder** tool. The last two webcasts will provide a live forum for viewers to “**Ask the Experts**” about prescription drug coverage issues. The schedule for the webcasts is available at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/news/>.



THE CMS MOBILE OFFICE TOUR ENERGIZES COMMUNITIES

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt is conducting a cross-country mobile office tour to promote the new **Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage** available to all people with Medicare. So far the tour has visited 75 cities in 35 states, educating Medicare beneficiaries on how to sign up for the drug coverage and choose a plan that is right for them. In addition to educating beneficiaries, one of Secretary Leavitt's main goals is to “energize those who will educate seniors one-on-one about the benefit and help them pick a plan.” After the tour leaves a city, HHS personnel will continue to communicate with the community-based organizations about training resources and forming networks to help people with Medicare understand the new coverage. **Kathleen Harrington, Director of External Affairs at CMS**, said the tour will



Secretary Leavitt and Dept. of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao watch a traditional Korean dancer perform at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Vienna, VA.

complement mass advertising campaigns planned by HHS to promote the coverage. Organizations in those communities not visited by the tour that want to form similar networks can contact their CMS Regional Office and can learn about publications, training kits and training schedules by visiting the CMS website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships>.

Happenings

SEPTEMBER

Healthy Aging Month
www.healthyaging.net

National Cholesterol Education Month
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

20 Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day
1-800-444-6472
www.healthgap.omhrc.gov

OCTOBER

Healthy Lung Month
1-800-586-4872
www.lungusa.org

21 National Mammography Day
1-800-227-2345
www.cancer.org

24-25 3rd National Prevention Summit
Hyatt Regency
Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

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